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I do not hesitate to state that if that great waterway were located in a British possession, its shores, instead of being as they now are for the greater part of the way a howling wilderness, would be lined with prosperous settlements, and the waters of that mighty stream would be carrying 100 tons of shipping where they now carry one; that those great civilizers, trade and commerce, and agriculture, backed by law and order, would bring about in the adjacent territory a state of affairs that has never yet entered the head of the average Latin-American politician. If England has grabbed territory, she has grabbed it to some purpose, and no people or race, be they civilized or savage, that has come under her rule but has been raised in the social scale, benefited and made free, where formerly they were degraded, if not in an actual state of savagery or slavery.

It is all very well to "twist the Lion's tail," but truth is truth, and it is time the people of this country should, as regards England's rule and methods in her colonies and possessions, know a little more of it.

It is a pity that every person in this country could not read Mr. Wells's article, and let it thus be the means of doing away with a prejudice that is largely founded on traditional sentiment, fortified by ignorance.

Though the British Government has the name of a Monarchy, Americans should understand that it is to-day—and has been for the past sixty years—as much of a democracy as our own, and that it has done more to elevate and improve the condition of human beings in this benighted world than any other government on the face of the earth or, I might say, than all others combined.

A. S. CROWNINSHIELD,
Captain U. S. Navy.

METHODISM AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE.

ONE person out of every fourteen, one Christian out of every five, one Protestant out of every three in the United States is a Methodist. The statistics for 1895 show that there are in this country 5,452,654 members of the Methodist Church, and that the increase in membership for the year has been at the rate of one thousand every day.

The Methodist Church had its birth at the University of Oxford. A few students at Oxford of marked ability, of excellent scholarship, and of sterling character, becoming profoundly convinced of the necessity of a deeper religious experience, of a higher life, and a broader service for others, organized a club for religious purposes. The fellow-students were inclined to make fun of them, calling them among other names bible-moths, and Methodists, the last name of criticism being adopted as the permanent name for the denomination in this country. The Wesleys, Whitefield, and other members of the club took the coals from the college and lighted fires all over England and America. Wm. E. Gladstone in his great lecture at Oxford in 1893 thus refers to the founder of Methodism: "The remarkable will, energy, and character of John Wesley, now after a century and a half, are represented in the English-speaking race by organized bodies of adherents estimated at not less than 12,000,000, and by some at such a high figure as to exceed 20,000,000."

John Wesley was a statesman and organized the movement into permanent societies, which grew so rapidly that in five years from the time he gathered his first class it became necessary to organize a conference.

A band of Irish emigrants who had listened to Wesley preach in their home land, and had accepted his doctrine, came to New York city in 1760. Some of them having backslidden were gambling in a room, when Barbara Heck opened the door and rebuked them, saying: "We shall all go to hell together," and, looking at a man who had been a local preacher, said: "And our blood shall be upon you, Philip Embury, who ought to be preaching to us this day." The man heeded the rebuke and opened his residence, a little one-story house in Park Place, and preached to the people. Numbers drove them to an old rigging loft on Horse and Cart street (No. 120 William street), which soon became too small for the crowds that assembled. Ground was bought of Mrs. Barclay, widow of the second rector of Trinity Church, and in 1768 the first Methodist meeting house was built in America on the site now occupied by John Street Methodist Episcopal Church. At the close of the Revolutionary War, at the Christmas conference at Baltimore, on December 24, 1784, the Wesleyan Mission became the Methodist Episcopal Church. There were then 15,000 members, which number to the present time has doubled itself eight and one-half times, while the population of this country has only doubled itself four and a half times. In 1844 the slavery question divided the Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South was organized. In 1872 it had about 600,000 members; now it has nearly 6,000 preachers, over 13,500 churches, and 1,380,000 members. The General Conference now being held in Cleveland, Ohio, is the legislative body of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This branch of Methodism has 16,000 ministers, 24,605 churches, and 2,630,000 members. There are about 3,000,000 in its Sunday Schools, and 1,250,000 members of a young people's society, recently organized, called the Epworth League. It has a publishing house with a net capital of \$3,397,000, whose profits last year were in the neighborhood of \$200,000, more than a half of which was given to disabled ministers and widows and orphans of ministers. Its missionary society gives \$1,250,000 annually. Its church extension society has nearly \$1,000,000 of an endowment fund, and builds three new Methodist churches in the United States every day. Its Freedman's Aid and Educational Society has spent over \$4,000,000 since the war in the South, for the education of the blacks and poor whites. It has educational institutions whose grounds and buildings are worth \$14,000,000, whose endowment is about the same amount, and whose students number 43,000. Its periodicals are able and widely circulated. Every department of benevolent work is represented by efficient organizations.

The General Conference meets every four years on the first of May and continues its session a month. It is composed of ministerial delegates elected by the annual conferences on the basis of one representative to every forty-five members; and of lay delegates, two of whom are allowed for each conference, except where there is but one ministerial delegate, when only one is permitted. The lay delegates are chosen by an electoral conference composed of one layman from each charge. The conference in session in Cleveland is composed of 520 members.

The two most important questions to be considered are the admission of women as lay delegates to the General Conference, and the removal of the time limit forbidding more than five years of continual service in any pastoral charge. Laymen had no voice in making the laws of the Methodist Church till the year 1872 when the General Conference admitted lay delegates. This action opened the question as to woman's eligibility to a seat

in the General Conference. In 1880 and 1884 several women were elected as reserve delegates, and at the General Conference of 1888 held in New York five women delegates appeared demanding admission. After a long, warm and able discussion the women were excluded, the lay and ministerial members both recording a majority against them. The question was then sent down to the churches, and the people gave a majority in favor of the women, but as the Annual Conferences did not give a two-thirds majority women were excluded from the General Conference of 1892. The Annual Conferences of 1895-1896 were asked to vote again on the subject. The vote is so close that returns from the last conference will be necessary to determine the result. Four conferences did not receive official notice of the proposed question; which fact may invalidate the whole vote.

It is hinted that the friends of woman's admission, should they fail to secure a three-fourths vote of the preachers, or a two-thirds vote of the General Conference, will claim that no change in the constitution of the church is needed, and admit women by a majority vote of the General Conference. Such a step would be unfair and calamitous.

Mrs. Bashford, wife of President Bashford, of the Ohio Wesleyan University, has been elected a delegate to the present General Conference, and it is possible she will be admitted by the constitutional two-thirds majority. Then would follow inevitably the licensing of women to preach, their ordination, their appointment to pastoral charges, and their election to any office in the Church, including that of the Episcopacy. We think the Church has plunged too precipitately into the revolution. The agitation of this question was begun by brilliant consecrated women, who, acting upon the theory that woman was oppressed, when she was enjoying the supremacy of love, that her sphere was circumscribed, when it was as wide as home or nation demanded the mastery of authority as well as of love. These agitators were aided by a band of women outside of the Church, who, in their demands for a feminine masculinity, brushed aside the example of Christ, ridiculed Paul, hissed at the Church, and insisted upon woman's admission to the General Conference. The new idea grew rapidly. The coal dropped into the tuft of grass now sweeps through the Church as a forest fire. The people, generally, ministers and laymen, think the time has come for the change; that it will not hurt woman, but will add wisdom, energy, and usefulness to the Church. Majorities have no power to turn folly into wisdom. A large majority killed Socrates and crucified Christ. If the change is against nature and the Scriptures, as many firmly believe, a four-fourths majority would not make it right.

Another important question that will be discussed is the time limit of pastoral service. For one reason or another short pastorates have been the rule of the Christian ministry in this country. It is believed that the average term of the so-called settled pastorates is not over three years. While ministerial migration is the law, there are in other denominations long pastorates, some of them the symbols of stagnation, some of them unfortunate in breaking the heart of the pastor or breaking up the church when the pastoral relation is severed, but some of them an unmixed blessing. We believe the Methodist Church can make a long term possible without destroying the itinerant system, and should do so. The time limit is not now and never has been one of the restrictive rules or a part of the constitution of the church; it is only what might be called one of the by-laws. There was no limit in Wesley's day.

He stayed as long as he pleased and kept his preachers in a place as long as he desired. Circumstances made their stay in one charge necessarily brief. There was no time limit in the Methodist Church of this country at the beginning. Bishop Asbury influenced the General Conference of 1804 to vote a limit of two years on the pastoral term of any man in a single charge. The limit applied only to pastors. Secretaries, agents, editors, presidents or professors of colleges were exempt.

This limit was retained for sixty years, when, at the General Conference of 1864, it was moved up to three years, where it remained till the Conference of 1888, when it was extended to five years. We believe it would be an advantage to the Church if the time limit were entirely removed. The change from two to three and then to five years has not destroyed the itineracy as the opponents of the change maintained, nor do we think that a removal of the limit would destroy it. In the earlier history of this country, when the population was scattered and migratory missionary labor seemed to be almost the sole need, and the pioneer ministers adjusted themselves to the need with marvellous facility, the time limit acted as a strong arm of evangelistic power. Now that the population is more settled and its rush to the cities is so impetuous, the work of building up the Church and adjusting it to the changed social conditions is as imperative as gathering the people into the kingdom, and a longer term in the great cities is a necessity. A longer term would be good for the minister. It would compel increased diligence in reading, study and pulpit preparation. It would enable him to lay deeper and broader plans and build more substantial and artistic superstructures. The dead line is where a minister ceases to do new work, though he be but thirty years of age. The change would give the Methodist ministers the opportunity that those of other denominations have of fastening themselves to the local institutions of education, benevolence, and reform.

The lengthening of the term would dignify the regular pastorate which under the present system is too often discounted. The removal of the limit would be good for the churches, permitting a short or a long term as the people might desire or Providence indicate. Dr. J. M. Buckley, in an editorial in the *Christian Advocate* of April 2, makes a compromise proposition which is likely to be adopted by the Conference at Cleveland. It is as follows: "When a Quarterly Conference, without debate in the absence of the pastor, by ballot, shall by a three-fourths vote of the entire membership of the Quarterly Conference assigning the conditions of the pastorate as the ground for the necessity, request the reappointment of the pastor whose limit is about to expire, the Bishop presiding at the next Conference may return such pastor for another year, without regard to the number of years he may have served already in the charge." Dr. Butts, President of Drew Theological Seminary, suggests as an amendment to the proposition that in these exceptional cases only five additional years of service be allowed or ten years in all.

F. C. IGLEHART.

THE AGRICULTURAL PROBLEM.

NO INTELLIGENT man who has had opportunities for observation can doubt that the "Agricultural Problem" is the most vital in American politics to-day, though it has been thrust aside by issues that are at most only corollaries to the main proposition.

The situation is anomalous and unparalleled. The country has had